

VZCZCXRO3071
RR RUEHIK
DE RUEHSL #0501 3341719
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 301719Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0291
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0339

UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 000501

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CE J. MOORE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: REGIONAL ELECTIONS: SMER SWEEPS ALL BUT ONE REGION

REF: BRATISLAVA 484

¶1. Summary: On November 28, Slovak voters in four of eight regions elected their new regional governors or "zupans" in the second round of Slovakia's regional elections. PM Fico's SMER ("direction") had already secured victory in the other four regions during the first round on November 14 (reftel), and added three more to the win column with this election. Pavol Freso, a current Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) MP, was the only member of the opposition to win a zupan slot, carrying Bratislava handily. Voter turnout nationwide was 18.39 percent, which was approximately 3 percent lower than the first round. End Summary.

¶2. Voters in Bratislava, Banska Bystrica, Trencin, and Presov regions elected their zupans in the run-off elections between the two highest vote-earners in each region from November 14's first round. In Banska Bystrica, SMER MEP Vladimir Manka won 53.7 percent of the vote in a tight race against SDKU MP Jozef Mikus. In Trencin, SMER-HZDS incumbent Pavol Seldacek won 59 percent of the vote to beat former Minister of Defense Martin Fedor (SDKU). In Presov, the SMER-HZDS incumbent Peter Chudik won 54 percent against opposition candidate Jan Hudacky. In Bratislava, current SDKU MP Pavol Freso defeated incumbent Vladimir Bajan, an independent supported by SMER and HZDS.

¶3. PM Fico declared the regional elections a "landslide victory" for SMER and conceded that perhaps it was a mistake to support independent candidate Bajan in Bratislava rather than nominating a SMER member. He also alluded to a shake-up in Bratislava's SMER apparatus. SDKU Chairman Dzurinda called Freso's Bratislava win "a historic event" as it is the first time that a SDKU member has been elected zupan. SDKU Vice Chairman Ivan Miklos claimed that "Freso defeated not only his rival but also Robert Fico."

¶4. Comment: While the results of the second round were predicted in advance, the absence of further allegations of vote-buying, especially in Banska Bystrica and Presov, which were at the center of the controversy in the first round, was not a given. We think that Freso's win and Jozef Mikus's solid performance in Banska Bystrica give the opposition some hope and perhaps incentive to collaborate more closely in the run-up to next June's national parliamentary elections. End Comment.

EDDINS